



New Medicare GP Mental Health Care items

Background

From 1 November 2006, new GP Mental Health Care items will be available on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). The new items will improve access to mental health services provided by GPs and have been developed in consultation with GP organisations.

The items provide a structured framework for GPs to undertake early intervention, assessment and management of patients with mental disorders, and provide new referral pathways to clinical psychologists and other allied mental health service providers.

The new items will replace the existing 3 Step Mental Health Process items available for incentive payments through the Practice Incentives Program (PIP), under the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Program ('SIP trigger' items).

The Australian Government will continue to honour its commitment to supporting the key components of BOIMHC, including education and training for GPs, appropriate remuneration of GPs for delivery of Focussed Psychological Strategies, support from psychiatrists, and access to allied health services.

The superseded 3 Step Mental Health Process items will be retained until 30 April 2007 so that services commenced, but not finished by 1 November 2006 can be completed.

Overview of the changes

There are three new GP Mental Health Care items.

(1) Preparation of a GP Mental Health Care Plan (item 2710)

- Involves the assessment of a patient and preparation of a GP Mental Health Care Plan.
- Enables referral of patients to psychiatrists, and for psychological therapy by clinical psychologists or focussed psychological strategies by qualified GPs or allied mental health professionals.
- Recommended frequency is one plan per patient, with a new plan only being prepared when clinically required (generally not within 12 months of a previous plan), supported by continuing management through consultation and review services.
- The Medicare rebate is \$150.

(2) Review of a GP Mental Health Care Plan (item 2712)

- Enables a review of the patient's progress against the goals in the GP Mental Health Care Plan.
- Recommended frequency is an initial review between four weeks and six months after the completion of the GP Mental Health Care Plan and, if required, a further review at least three months after the first review.
- The Medicare rebate is \$100.

(3) GP Mental Health Care Consultation (item 2713)



- An extended consultation (at least 20 minutes) with a patient where the primary treating problem is related to a mental disorder.
- May be used for continuing management of a patient with a mental disorder, including for a patient being managed under a GP Mental Health Care Plan.
- The Medicare rebate is \$66.

Access to mental health services

Patients who have a GP Mental Health Care Plan, or who are being managed by a GP under a referred psychiatrist assessment and management plan (item 291), have access to certain mental health service items on the MBS.

Eligible patients can claim up to 12 Medicare rebates per calendar year (in two groups of up to six services) for individual services provided by clinical psychologists, appropriately trained GPs and/or other allied mental health professionals. Alternatively, patients can be referred for FPS services under Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS), available through Divisions of General Practice.

Eligible patients can also claim up to 12 rebates per calendar year for group services provided by clinical psychologists and/or other allied mental health professionals.

Patients with pre-1 November 2006 3 Step Mental Health Process

Patients with mental health plans completed and reviewed before 1 November 2006 using the 3 Step Mental Health Process can receive ongoing management from their GP, as required, through the new GP Mental Health Care Consultation item.

Completing a 3 Step Mental Health Process after 1 November 2006

If a mental health care plan using the 3 Step Mental Health Process was commenced before 1 November 2006, but not completed and claimed by that date, the service should be completed and claimed for using the 3 Step Mental Health Process trigger items. These items will be available until 30 April 2007.

From 1 November 2006 GPs should use the new GP Mental Health Care items to prepare new mental health care plans for patients.

Mental health education and training for GPs

Although not mandatory, it is strongly recommended that GPs providing mental health care using the new GP Mental Health Care items have completed appropriate mental health training (in addition to normal medical training), such as training recognised through the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration.

Appropriate mental health training can help GPs to further develop and improve their skills in diagnosing, treating and referring patients with mental disorders to appropriate services.

Further information

More detailed information is available at www.health.gov.au or by calling Medicare Australia on 132 150 (for GPs) or 132 011 (for patients). New MBS items are subject to the normal MBS regulatory approval process.